

BOOK REVIEW

Bivalves of Australia, Volume 2, 1998.

Kevin Lamprell & John Healy; Backhuys Publishers, Leiden

Bivalves have been a relatively neglected group of molluscs in contemporary Australian malacological literature. Boasting more than 1400 locally recorded species the Bivalvia are a significant part of the Australian molluscan fauna yet have received comparatively scant attention from popular authors. With the exception of a few families favoured by collectors for their form and colour eg. Pectinidae and Spondylidae, and some commercial groups such as the mussels, oysters and Giant Clams there is a dearth of knowledge about most of the Australian bivalve fauna. Hence the appearance of '*Bivalves of Australia, Vol. 2*' on the booksellers shelves is timely. It is particularly welcomed by those in the malacological fraternity with more eclectic tastes in shells than merely glossy gastropods such as the much published cowries, cones and volutes. Following the publication of the senior author's first volume (with Thora Whitehead), this second volume has been eagerly awaited by amateur collectors and professional malacologists alike. In contrast to volume one which dealt largely with the more popular bivalve groups, this volume includes many of the lesser known families; many with representatives under 5mm (some less than 2mm) in diameter. In the early sixties Bernard Cotton laid the groundwork for a wider review of the Australian bivalves by documenting the impressive southern Australian fauna. Since then trawling expeditions along Australia's eastern and northern coasts have added greatly to the material available for study and provided the impetus for these two publications. However, the senior author's personal efforts in collecting bivalves from many parts of Australia's long coastline over many years should not be underestimated.

Now, for the first time, the bulk of Australia's bivalve fauna is exposed to the general malacological community. Previously much of the information on many of these bivalve families was available only in literature generally not accessible to most collectors. This fact, together with the scattered nature of the scientific literature, has probably also contributed greatly to the lack of taxonomic activity within the group. Much of professional malacological research, particularly systematics, is dependent on the widespread collecting efforts of amateurs- 'the feet on the ground, hands in the water people'. In turn their interest is dependent on the availability of popular literature which provides the names of shells. A primary identification guide such as '*Bivalves of Australia, Vol. 2*' will hopefully stimulate interest, collection and research.

This volume illustrates 707 species from 72 families not covered in volume one. There is also an addendum which presents an additional 71 species from families dealt with in that volume plus a list of corrections to taxonomic placements made in that publication. The colour illustration of most species in the present volume is combined with a reproduction of original line drawings of the smaller representatives in what is an unusual but effective presentation. The original line drawings, in many cases, are of such quality that their depiction of key sculptural features could not have been matched by conventional

photographic methods. In many cases type material was used in the illustrations, largely in acknowledgement of the many misunderstandings which have been perpetrated in the literature through interpretation of often brief and inconclusive descriptions. A significant improvement on the presentation style of volume one is the depiction of smaller sized species at the same size (rather than scale) as the larger species. This will add greatly to its utility as an identification guide. The positioning of descriptions and illustrations on facing pages (at the insistence of the authors) is also another practical feature to be commended. In addition there is a useful pictorial guide to families, an interesting introduction covering general aspects of the group and a well researched list of literature references.

The obvious enthusiasm of the senior author has been a major contributing factor to the success of this venture. His knowledge of the Australian bivalve fauna is comprehensive and his eye for new species acute. The scientific and technical skills of John Healy have been widely broadcast through a plethora of beautifully crafted publications. The combination of the qualities possessed by these authors is perhaps not unique in popular natural history publishing, however, in this case it has led to the production of a distinctly unique publication. One which will remain a prime source for students and fanciers of Australian bivalves for many years to come.

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